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**FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS CELL-HEAD OF MEXICAN COCAINE
TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION**

DAVID N. KELLEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that, late on Friday, a Federal jury in Manhattan convicted JAIME CHAVEZ and ANASTACIO ACOSTA-FELIX, two California-based cocaine traffickers who worked with a major Mexican cocaine cartel, of cocaine trafficking charges. CHAVEZ was also convicted of possessing a firearm equipped with a silencer in furtherance of that cocaine trafficking charge.

Count One of the three-count indictment charged CHAVEZ and ACOSTA-FELIX with conspiring to distribute five or more kilograms of cocaine between October 2001 and May 10, 2003. Counts Two and Three charged CHAVEZ with possessing firearms in furtherance of that conspiracy.

According to the evidence at trial, CHAVEZ was the head of the conspiracy in the United States and was in direct communication with members of the Mexican cartel in Sinaloa,

Mexico. CHAVEZ coordinated the receipt and transportation of hundreds of kilograms of cocaine which were then distributed in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York by other members of this organization. ACOSTA-FELIX was one of several co-conspirators who were based in New York and helped to supply cocaine to the New York-based cell of this cocaine trafficking organization.

The jury convicted CHAVEZ and ACOSTA-FELIX on Count One of the indictment. The jury also convicted CHAVEZ on Count Two of the indictment which charged that CHAVEZ possessed a firearm equipped with a silencer in furtherance of the cocaine conspiracy. The conspiracy charged as Count One carries a mandatory minimum sentence of ten years' imprisonment, and a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. However, because CHAVEZ has previously been convicted of a felony narcotics offense, his mandatory minimum sentence for the Count One conviction is twenty years' imprisonment. Additionally, for the conviction on Count Two, using a firearm equipped with a silencer in furtherance of the cocaine conspiracy, a mandatory consecutive sentence of thirty years' imprisonment is applicable. CHAVEZ and ACOSTA-FELIX are scheduled to be sentenced by United States District Judge GERARD E. LYNCH on April 15, 2005. Judge LYNCH also presided over the trial.

GREGORIO BARRAZA, JOSE LUIS BARRAZA, DANIEL BARRAZA, NICHOLAS IBARRA, LUZ ROSA, and CARLOS HERRERA, other participants

charged in the conspiracy, pled guilty in Manhattan Federal court in 2004 and are also awaiting sentencing.

Friday's conviction was the result of a joint investigation involving the United States Attorney's Office, the offices of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA") and the United States Bureau of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Mexico. U.S. Attorney KELLEY praised the outstanding investigative efforts of the DEA and ICE.

Assistant United States Attorneys ANIRUDH BANSAL and ERIC SNYDER are in charge of the prosecution.

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